1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

WAR AND WAR LEADERSHIP

COUP AND STATUS

Comanche war notions conformed to the general Plains pattern of raiding and coup-counting.[1] The raid might be made by a party of any size, from a single warrior up. The coup was an individual exploit, made in any contact with the enemy, *after* it had been socially recognized both as achieved in fact and as worthy of distinction; a rough equivalent of an official citation after a modern engagement, if such were undiluted by political considerations.

The life of the Comanche male centered around warfare and raiding. The main objectives were the taking of horses, the counting of coup, and the killing of enemies. Motives for horse-taking were two. Horses, as we have seen, were the important form of property accumulation; the man who had a large herd was wealthy; he could afford generosity to his friends and relatives; he harbored visiting guests from other tribes. Horses also gained him prestige for bravery and cleverness; the taking of horses under difficult conditions provided opportunity for exploits of valor. Such exploits made reputation. Horses gained by inheritance, gift, or breeding reflected the first value, but not the second (except as a carry-over). The killing of enemies was similar in that it led to prestige through accumulation of war honors; but it showed a more direct tribal function when vengeance for the death of a tribesman came in question—though tribal interest was not absent from horse-taking; to have your horses stolen was to be out-matched and shamed by the successful thief (an out-triber).

It required more bravery to hit an adversary with a spear or a war club than to pierce him with a bow-driven arrow or a gun-driven bullet. Thus striking an enemy gave ground for an honored coup, while long-distance killing did not. The how of the killing mattered more than the killing itself. A coup was more valued than a scalp, for, "Anybody could scalp a dead man." But the Comanche considered the removal of a scalp under fire as worthy of a coup. How much scalp the Comanche took depended on how hot the circumstances were. He preferred to take the whole scalp, but if he was pressed for time he seized only what he could get. Scalps were used in the Victory Dance and were desirable as fringe decoration for shirts and shields.

In the foregoing, and in the following, the legal analysis is deliberately pushed further than the Comanche would consciously push it. In any

[1] Cf. George Bird Grinnell, *Coup and Scalp Among the Plains Indians* (American Anthropologist, vol. 12, 1910), pp. 296–310.

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Lowie emphasizes the play aspect of this phase of warfare. "Obviously," he writes of the Crow, "the idea was not primarily to reduce a hostile force but to execute a 'stunt'; to play a game according to whimsical rules."[5]

In addition to the standardized honors any audacious deed performed against the enemy could be claimed as a coup by a Shoshone or Comanche.

WAR INITIATIVE

The prosecution of warfare was very much a matter of individual discretion. Any Comanche was theoretically eligible to lead a war party. There was no chief or power which could say him nay. Were the individual not, however, a man of proved reputation or the possessor of potent medicine, his raid would remain strictly personal and private. He would simply be unable to muster a following. Nevertheless, no one would object to his going out alone. It was quite a different matter, on the other hand, if a man whose qualities had been attested in combat let his intention to take the war path be known. All fighters who wished to do so came to signify their desire to join his party. Dreams about a successful raid were not deemed necessary as a sanction for starting a war party, but in most cases such dreams were the effective stimulus.

There were two primary motivations for organizing a war party. The first was an entirely personal matter, depending simply upon desire for action, honors, or horses. Merely to feel the urge was to be at liberty to muster such men as would volunteer to go. On the other hand, a war party instigator might bind himself to avenge the death of a fellow tribesman by enemy hands. A slain man's father carried a heavy weight upon his heart while his dead son remained unavenged. "His conscience is not clear." There was but one thing for him to do. He must seek out the lodge of a brave warrior who had compassion for his suffering and whom people would trust and follow. Carrying his sacred pipe, the father or relative of the dead man offered smoke. The warrior knew what was wanted. If he accepted the pipe, smoking with the emissary, he bound himself in contract to take out a party which would not return until it had taken an enemy scalp. (We were unable to discover a single instance in which the pledge was unfulfilled.)

The warrior made known to the camp that he was going forth. He was to avenge the death of "their" slain friend. He exhorted. He said the young men would join him; he told the people that braves did not care, though it meant death. The Vengeance Dance was held before departure. The dancers were those who were going to join the war party. This sort of war party

[5] R. H. Lowie, *The Crow Indians* (New York, 1937), p. 228.

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721 never looked for horses; its object was to scalp; it turned back as soon as a single scalp was taken. The Scalp Dance was held upon the return.

Ordinarily, a man contemplating leading out a party drummed and sang war songs in his tipi. Those who wished to go came and joined him in the singing there. A war dance was held the night before departure. During the afternoon the entire party rode at a lope through the camp. They rode in a single file behind the organizer. The last horse carried two men, one of whom had performed the honorable deed of carrying a dismounted or wounded comrade out of battle-danger. No onlooker could forget this ever-present obligation, nor the public recognition to a man who had fulfilled it. The ceremony is known as the Pony Dance.

In the War Dance only braves leaving on the raid could participate; each was helped by a young girl partner. Others were onlookers.

A rendezvous outside the village had been set by the leader. During the night the warriors stole off to the gathering place. The raid was under way.

POWERS OF THE WAR LEADER

701 624 The leader of an organized war party was absolute dictator of all of the activities of his followers as long as they remained in his party. With so loose and voluntary a collection of personnel, disobedience might be looked for. The invariable conviction of the Comanche is that a man never failed to do what the leader asked. It was always said that a brave leader never asked of his men what he himself would not readily do. Each knew this. Each knew, too, that to disobey might bring disaster on the party. Each did what he was told. Not a single instance of the use of force or other punishment as sanctions in the hands of the war leader could be uncovered. If a man did not trust in the ability and wisdom of the war leader he did not join the party. Once in, he was in, so long as he stayed.

So long as he stayed. Some Comanche raiding parties were gone for an entire year or more. Disaffection could and did set in in such a period of time. The solution of such difficulties was simple. The party split. The disgruntled fighter and those who sided with him withdrew to go their own way.[8] This, be it noted, is also the procedure followed when a man and his friends did not like the way in which things were being run in the band in times of peace. A man followed only the leader in whom he had confidence; he obeyed that leader to the utmost; when he lost confidence, he withdrew from that leader's sphere of influence.

The powers of the chief were (a) to determine the objective of the raid,

[8] Cf., Case 14, pp. 68–69, below.

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957
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composed chiefly of a peculiar kind of clay—so that it would 727
be difficult for a stranger to distinguish me from one of their 302
own number. As I became more and more acquainted with those who inhabited the little village we had joined, I observed four girls, the youngest twelve, and the oldest, perhaps, eighteen, whose appearance attracted my attention. They had the copper-colored complexion, but not the high cheek bones and the course black hair and the peculiar expression of countenance that always distinguish the aborigines. On the other hand, they possessed the Anglo-Saxon face—their gait was different from that of the other women of the tribe—and what was the most extraordinary, they had fine light hair, inclined to auburn, and upon one of them it curled. They were a mystery to me, until one day I saw the women coming from the river where they had gone to bathe, and walking among them were these four, perfectly white. The paint had been washed from their faces in the water, revealing to me their race. I made assiduous inquiries of Big Wolf and others, and of themselves, but could obtain no satisfactory information. They knew no other than the language of the Comanches, and in all respects conformed to their manners and customs. It was, therefore, evident to me they had been captured in early childhood and remembered no other life than that they were then leading.

More or less of the tribe were almost constantly absent 721 ●
on the war path. Sometimes they would sally forth of their own motion; at others, a number of them would join a party from a different village happening to pass that way. Even- 727
tually they returned, and the manner of their approach indicated whether they had been successful, or the reverse. On one occasion, during the summer, they brought in a captive, blindfolded as I had been, and had a rousing war-

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957
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the buffalo-skin saddle, I sat down upon it and consulted with myself as to what it was best to do. My safety depended much upon circumstances. If the body of the chief should happen to be discovered immediately, my escape was doubtful. The moment it was found, my knowledge of savage life taught me, a party would instantly and eagerly start upon my trail, and at the same time messengers be sent to all the tribes far and near, calling on them to keep a sharp lookout for my approach, so that I had as much to apprehend in front as in the rear.

I was provided with the dead chief's rifle and ammunition, and consequently had the means of kindling a fire, but making the one or discharging the other, at least for some days, would be a dangerous experiment, inasmuch as the noise of the rifle or the light of the fire might expose me. The demands of appetite, however, would render it necessary to risk both, and, in fact, already were they becoming clamorous, having fasted since our early departure in the morning from the camp of the Wild Horse. Being impossible at that hour to capture game, my thoughts turned upon the mule. She had followed me unexpectedly and could be of no possible use; on the contrary, in all probability, would prove an annoyance. Necessity, which is, indeed, the mother of invention, suggested how I could turn her to account, and the suggestion was adopted. Walking up to the tired and patient beast, as unsuspicious of harm as was her now stark owner when he bent down to drink, I grasped the long knife that was wont to grace his girdle, and drew it across her throat.

When life was extinct, I cut from her hams long thin slips of flesh to the measure of some ten pounds, and having done so, resolved to run the venture of kindling a fire, trusting that the Rolling Thunder was still reposing undis-

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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492 the Comanche usually took it into a sand-bottomed creek or into deep water for his first mountings. This precaution took the bounce out of the bucking and made for softer landing.

721 Capturing wild horses had its points, but to the Comanche stealing them was better. And the Comanche was the top horse thief of them all. When he went raiding, it was sometimes for scalps, but usually he was more interested in plunder and horses than in killing.

Acquisition of horses by plunder appealed to a Comanche, for it enhanced his prestige. Taking horses under difficult conditions provided opportunity for valor and cleverness, and it was in its own right a form of coup: stealing horses from enemies was a distinguished mark of honor, and those most successful in this enterprise were highly respected. Captain Marcy reported that Is-sa-keep, a chief of one of the Northern Comanche bands, said that he was the father of four sons who were a great source of comfort to him in his old age for they could steal more horses than any other men in his band.[18] Some, like Rhoda Greyfoot's father and his two brothers, made it a point of honor never to return from a raid without horses.

The Comanche taking a guarded horse was a ghost. There are instances on record of Comanches' stealing hobbled and guarded mounts of soldiers. Colonel Dodge says that a Comanche could crawl into a "bivouac where a dozen men were sleeping, each with a horse tied to his wrist by the lariat, cut a rope within six feet of the sleeper, and get away with the horse without waking a soul." The Colonel also cites an instance of two Comanche raiders entering a stable under apparently impossible circumstances and making off with two of the best horses. The stable was built of heavy timbers set on end surmounted by a heavy plate doweled into place. The stable yard was enclosed by a heavy picket fence with similar dowel construction. Both yard and stable were guarded by sentries. Yet one stormy night the two Indians cut the dowels, removed enough timbers to permit a horse to go through, and made away with the two best animals without alarming either sentry. They were some sixty miles away before they were overtaken.[19]

[18] Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 159.
[19] R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 401–402.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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The Horse and the Buffalo

Northern Mexico afforded a golden harvest of horses with little danger to the Comanche raiders. Padre Jacob Sadelmeyer wrote in 1744 that the Comanches were raiding the Río Grande frontier for horses. Long years of internal strife and revolution after revolution had impoverished the Spanish borderlands, and the poor inhabitants were without adequate means of defense. Spanish and Mexican authorities, fearing revolution, resolutely sought to deprive the people of arms. The fierce Comanche raiders struck the defenseless towns, haciendas, and ranches like a whirlwind, capturing thousands of horses, mules, and cattle, and many Mexican children. They swept south to Durango, within five hundred miles of Mexico City, and over Zacatecas, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Coahuila, San Luis, and Nuevo León. "For days together," said one traveler who passed through the country from Mexico City to Santa Fé in 1846, "I traversed a country completely deserted on this account, passing through ruined villages untrodden for years by the foot of man." The same authority stated that from the fall of 1845 until the time of his visit in September, 1846, on the northern frontier of Mexico "upwards of ten thousand head of horses and mules have already been carried off, and scarcely has a hacienda or rancho on the frontier been unvisited and everywhere the people have been killed or captured.[20]

When "Dot" Babb, for many years a captive and later an adopted warrior-member of the Comanche tribe, expressed the view that the Comanches had a limited vocabulary,[21] he was reflecting the view of earlier centuries that primitives are incapable of abstract thought—an incapacity reflected in paucity of language. Of course, it is perfectly true that primitive peoples, whose simpler cultures have fewer objects to identify and fewer abstract concepts demanding expression, do have need for fewer words. But this is no indication of any inability to refine a vocabulary. Boas pointed out long ago that Eskimos, to whom the condition of snow is a life and death matter, have more than a score of words for snow in various degrees of temperature, crystallization, moisture, and compactness. LaBarre, in his recent work among the Aymara Indians of Bolivia, who made potatoes their mainstay in prehistoric times, recorded more than two hundred words

[20] George F. Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains*, 112.
[21] Babb, *op. cit.*, 144.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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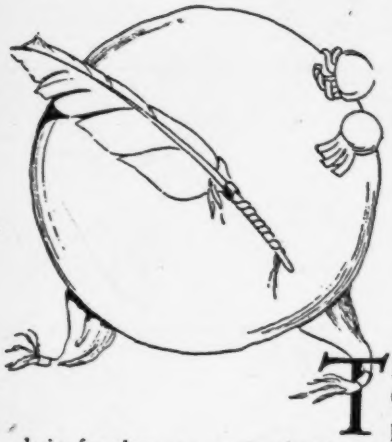
Warfare



THE motives which led the Comanches to go to war were plunder, love of fighting, a desire for glory as a means of achieving personal status, eagerness for revenge, and a determination to take and afterwards to hold free from all trespassers, both white and red men, the hunting grounds of the South Plains. Their bravery and their desire to win prestige for themselves inspired them to take many risks. Prior to the introduction of the horse, Plains warfare was sporadic and not bloody; but the introduction of the horse furnished all the Plains tribes a new and strong motive for war, for by war men might acquire something of great value and they now had the mobility with which to strike at each other. Concomitantly with the horse came another new factor: the pressure of the whites on the eastern frontier, setting in motion a chain reaction of tribal displacements that caused group after group to fight for a place under the western sun. War became the pattern of life; the military cult became the ideal of the aspiring young man. The old peace chief ideal still survived, but it was destined to be overshadowed by the ideal personality type of warrior.

War honors provided the basis of the whole system of rank and social status in Comanche society. Consequently, the life of the male came to be centered around warfare and raiding. The men were all warriors. War was regarded as the noblest of pursuits, one which every man should follow; and from earliest youth boys were taught

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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to excel in it. They were taught that success in war brought in its train the respect and admiration of the men, women, and children of the tribe, and that the most worthy virtue for a man was bravery. They were taught that death in battle, aside from being glorious, protected one from all the miseries which threatened later life and were inevitable to old age.

The Comanches, in conformity with the general Plains pattern, adhered to institutionalized procedure in giving social recognition of war honors: the practice of counting coup. The coup was an individual exploit, made in any contact with the enemy, after it had been socially and publicly recognized as worthy of distinction. In some respects it was a rough equivalent of an official citation after a modern engagement. It required more bravery to hit an adversary with a spear or a war club than to pierce him at a distance with an arrow or a bullet. Since the quality most highly esteemed was courage, striking an enemy thus gave ground for an honored coup, while long-distance killing did not necessarily do so. To scalp an enemy was not especially creditable, for anyone could scalp a dead man; hence scalping was only of secondary importance. But if the scalping were done under danger, it was considered worthy. How much of the scalp a Comanche took depended upon circumstances. He preferred to take the whole scalp, but if he were pressed for time or the situation were very dangerous, he seized only what he could get. The scalp was a trophy, proof of success to be used in the Victory Dance, and it was also desirable as a decorative fringe for shirts, shields, and tomahawks.

The bravest act that could be performed was to count coup on a live enemy. When hunting, if a dangerous animal was killed or wounded, boys and young men might race to see who could be the first to touch it, just as women sometimes raced to see who could be the first to touch the first fallen animal in a buffalo hunt. The stealing of tethered horses from within a hostile camp ranked as a very high honor, but it was not so valued as striking a fallen enemy who lay near his own lines or as drawing blood from an enemy in hand-to-hand combat. In addition to the standardized honors, any audacious deed performed against the enemy could be claimed as a coup by the Comanches.

Contemporary Comanches tell a tall tale of two warriors who

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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went on a coup-seeking expedition to see which was the better man. They traveled until they came to a Ute camp.

"Tonight I'll go in to see what I can do," said one.

After dark, he drew his blanket over his head and sauntered into the Ute encampment. From within one of the lodges he heard the songs of a hand game in progress. Protected by his disguise, he walked right through the door to join the spectators. Nobody paid any attention to him. Casually and slowly moving about, he touched one after another of all the Utes in the lodge. When he had touched them all, he strolled out and rejoined his friend.

"He had counted coup on twenty enemies at one time. It was a great deed," said Post Oak Jim.

His friend was put to a real challenge. They traveled on, it is said, until late the next day they came to a lone ranch homestead.

"Tonight I'll go in to see what I can do," said the second Comanche. When the lights were out in the cabin, he crept forward. He entered the little house and found the rancher and his wife sleeping together in their bed. With all the stealth he would have used in untethering a picketed horse before the lodge of an enemy chief, he lifted the sleeping woman from the side of her unsuspecting husband. Without wakening her, he brought her to the side of his friend. Together they took her back to the main camp. The People said this was the greatest coup of all. No Comanche had ever done anything like that before!

It sometimes happened that a man, if he had been ill for long without hope of recovery or if some misfortune of such significance that he no longer wished to live had befallen him, determined to give his life by some daring act of bravery against the enemy. This was suicide, but a socially recognized way of ending one's life in a most honorable manner. He went out in one grand coup.

A daring exploit was not of itself in the strictest sense a coup. Rather it was the raw material for one. If unrecognized, the deed remained only a matter of individual memory, for only recognition in due "legal" form turned the deed into a coup. It often happened that an exploit claimed by an individual was unwitnessed, not believed, or claimed by one or more other warriors. The man who believed he had a right to claim a coup made a strong fight for recog-

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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721 554 nition of his deed. Other than securing witnesses or presenting circumstantial evidence in support of his claim, he might take a formal oath that what he claimed was true. It is evident that in the confusion of battle a man might believe himself entitled to honors claimed by others. At the first opportunity after the fight, the chief called the warriors together, preferably before they arrived at the main camp.[1] But the procedure varied from band to band and according to circumstances. One account has the leading warriors seat themselves in a semicircle. Near the opening of the circle was placed a buffalo hide. Some of the Indians danced to the beat of drums. A warrior rode into the circle, stopped suddenly, and plunged his spear in the buffalo hide. Music and dancing stopped, and the warrior under oath narrated in detail the circumstances connected with the deed which he claimed as a coup. When he had finished, he dismounted and joined his comrades in the semicircle, and the dancing and drumming were renewed. Then a second warrior was called upon. The same procedure was continued until each claimant for honors had told his story. Those seated in the semicircle either publicly recognized the deed as a coup or rejected the claim.

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A scout who was out alone sometimes ran unexpectedly into an enemy, perhaps killing or counting coup on one. In such a situation there was no one to witness his deed; it was necessary for him to attest its truth. If he was a member of the Water Horse band, he did so by taking the buffalo-chip oath. On returning to the band, he signaled that he had important news. Before entering the camp, he waited for all the warriors to assemble. They all lined up in a row behind three or four buffalo chips, which were stacked on end, tipi wise. When they were ready, the scout rode in and speared a chip for each man he had killed or struck. With each blow he cried, "*A:he!*" If he had counted no coup, he merely walked around the pile and then [717] scattered it as a sign that the news he was bringing was true. The false asseveration of a coup brought bad luck and death.

554 The Comanches recognized two coups struck on the same victim by different persons. Subsequent coups received no credit. The Cheyennes counted coup on an enemy three times, while the Arapahos touched four times. In battle, members of one tribe counted coup

[1] Informant: Yellowfish.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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The Comanches

554 424 A coup was regarded as a type of incorporeal property, which could be transferred by the owner to a comrade in public ceremony. The practice may have emerged only since the advent of the reservation, when the restrictions upon fighting imposed by the whites made the coup a commodity of scarcity, so that the ingenious Comanches devised the transfer technique. It was done in public in order that the recipient's right to the honor would be witnessed and duly recognized. It was considered best if the giver of the honors announced a dance, inviting all members of the band to be present. After the dance had continued for a time, the host, walking to the center of the ring, called a halt. There, in the presence of all the people, he narrated the details of a coup, swearing to the powers that the deed was his, and concluded by saying, "I now give this to my brother, ———." The man named then stood and claimed the deed, with the following words, "I now take this deed. Sun, Father, Moon above, and Earth, Mother, witness that it is mine." The drum was struck a resounding blow. If those present gave their assent, the transfer of the coup was complete. The coup was bestowed only upon brave men; it could be neither sold nor inherited.[5]

•721 The prosecution of warfare was a matter of individual discretion. Any Comanche was theoretically eligible to lead a war or raiding party, for there was no legal authority to restrain him. Although a vision was not deemed necessary as a sanction for starting a war party, it was in many cases the effective stimulus. Should a man inexperienced in warfare and without an established reputation attempt to organize and lead a party, he would be unlikely to secure a following. A young warrior was usually content to serve under others until he had gained experience. He must know when and how to attack and how to retreat without loss of men when the fighting went against him. On the other hand, a man whose qualities of bravery and leadership had been demonstrated in combat seldom found any difficulty in mustering a following when he announced his intention to go on the warpath. Nobody would risk leading a party without power. He may have received it through a vision or a dream. When a man declared that he knew how, he certainly felt that he did, else he would be afraid to say so. It was for each individual to determine for himself whether his own and the leader's power was working for success.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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726 they should act. Sometimes they sang. Perhaps before going to sleep the leader sang a spiritual song—a prayer to the guardian spirits for help and wisdom. Occasionally the leader might carry the pipe and have the men dance at night along the route. Ishatai carried the pipe around and had each society dance every night while on the way to Adobe Walls in 1874.[11]

War parties are difficult to distinguish from raiding parties, for the Comanches conducted both in much the same manner. The distinction rested for the most part in the stated objective of the undertaking, although a raiding party, if confronted with enemies, would fight; and a war party was not likely to pass by a chance to make off with horses or booty.

●721 Only the vengeance party moved with a singleness of purpose. The Comanche parent who had lost a son to the enemy "never rested in his mind until he had an enemy scalp to make things even." If he was still of a fighting age, he could seek a scalp or organize his own vengeance raid. But if this was beyond his abilities or if the aggrieved person was a widow who had lost a son or a husband, he or she would take a pipe to a war leader and offer smoke. If he accepted, the war leader bound himself to organize a vengeance expedition. He had a camp crier announce the project to all the camp. "The young people don't care if they get killed on this raid," he cried for all to hear. "They want revenge."

With the taking of a single scalp, the revenge raid accomplished its mission and was inevitably turned back by its leader, even if bigger prospects were near at hand. One scalp was all that was necessary for the Scalp Dance, and this was what they were after.

726 In their most destructive raids, the Comanche war party proceeded to some convenient point within striking distance of the settlements to be raided and established a temporary camp in which they left most of their supplies, horses, guards, and women. The leader sent out scouts to gather information. If their report was favorable, he informed the warriors of the plan of attack. The party often broke into a number of small bands, and the destructive work was begun. The preferred time was the period following the full of the moon. They

[11] Informant: Yellowfish. Yellowfish's father went to Adobe Walls with Ishatai, and afterwards told him the details of the raid many times.

7: Richardson D-4 (no date) 1929
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upon the side of the horse thus making of the animal a perfect screen between themselves and an imaginary enemy. "In this wonderful condition," he relates, "he will hang whilst his horse is at fullest speed, carrying with him his bow and his shield, and also long lance of fourteen feet in length, all or either of which he will wield upon his enemy as he passes; rising and throwing his arrows over the horses' back, or with equal ease and equal success under the horse's neck." Finally the artist learned that a partial explanation of the marvel was in the fact that a short hair halter was passed under the neck of the horse and both ends tightly braided into the mane on the withers. Through this loop the young warrier ran his arm and thus secured an anchor and rest for the fore part of his body.[20]

Horses were naturally the only form of wealth available to the Comanches. They were both useful and easily moved and an Indian's wealth was measured by the number of horses he possessed. Their horses were of good, indifferent or poor quality, depending on the success a given band had had in recruiting their scrubby mustang herds with better bred animals taken from the Mexican or Anglo-American frontier. With these Indians horse-stealing was both a science and an art and no warrior's training was complete until he was proficient in this respect. At the camp on the Clear Fork, in 1854, previously referred to, one warrior carried a shield "Ornamented with a *human scalp*, a grizzly bear's claw and a mule's tail, significant of the brave warrior and successful hunter and horse-thief."[21] Chief Is-sa-keep, of a band of northern Comanches, once told Captain Marcy that his four sons were as fine young men as could be found, that they were a great comfort to him in his old age, "and could steal more horses than any other young men in his band."[22] The brave's best horse was always saved for the hunt or war party and the Indian had that love for their favorite steed that always characterizes good horsemen.

As is the case among most savage peoples, war was a normal condition with the Comanches. For instance if expediency dictated that there be peace between the Comanches and Osages, the Texas

20. North American Indians, II, 73-74.
21. Parker, Notes Taken with Marcy, 195.
22. Exploration of the Red River, 97.

7: Richardson D-4 (no date) 1929
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border was still inviting and there the braves could find horses to steal and ranches to plunder; if there must be peace with Texas, there was at least one happy war ground, which according to Comanche ethics, was always a legitimate field of operation. That was Mexico. And hither the young braves would go, notwithstanding the more or less perfunctory efforts of the governments of the United States and Texas to stop them.

War with the Comanches might call forth united tribal effort or it might concern but a small party of warriors, depending on the circumstances. The chief or head man who wished to lead off a war party paraded through the camp, carrying in some cases a long pole with a red flag tipped with eagle's feathers, chanting a war song. If he was a popular leader and the bands was in a war mood, or if he could convince the young braves that his enterprise promised large returns by way of scalps, prisoners and booty, he would soon collect about him many warriors. War dances would be held, the leading men would make talks, runners would be sent to other bands and the expedition would take on large proportions. No warrior was obliged to join, but the young man who always stayed at camp would obviously soon become the object of much ridicule. However, the tribe was not entirely at the mercy of these young hot-spurs. If the expedition was likely to result in the flagrant violation of a popular treaty or if it was calculated to bring down upon the tribe the wrath of a powerful enemy, a more conservative sentiment would prevail and the movement would be nipped in the bud.

In this connection some description of Comanche weapons should be given. Although they acquired a few guns from white traders at a very early date, primitive weapons were all that a great majority of the tribesmen had as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. Their bows were of bois d'arc, rather short for long bows, being ordinarily not more than three feet in length. Sometimes they were wrapped with the sinew of the deer, and the bow string was of the same material. Their arrows were about twenty inches long, of flexible wood, with a triangular spike, or point, of iron. Two feathers intersecting each other at right angles were bound to the other extremity of the arrow and served to guide it. They frequently carried lances, one of which is described as "a piece of

11: Casagrande E,L-5 (1940) 1954
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

177 and Texans pushing from the south until the Comanche were contained on the Fort Sill Reservation in 1875. The submersion of the Comanche by White culture was well under way by the latter date and progressed at an ever accelerating tempo.

175 The Comanche first loomed upon the horizon of the Spanish Southwest shortly after the turn of the eighteenth century. Their presence in New Mexico was definitely [231] noted in 1705. They were already horse Indians at this date, having gotten the horse no later than 1690–1700.[13] As early as 175 1713[14] the Comanche were in conflict with 648 both the Spanish and the more peaceable 721 Indian tribes of the region and had embarked upon their historic role of marauders and horse thieves, striking always to the southwest. Although the province of New Mexico received the brunt of their attack, by 1758 they had destroyed a presidio in Texas and by 1776 they were crossing the Rio Grande to attack the Lipan as well as 175 the Spanish settlements. De Croix, a 648 Spanish general, describes the situation in his General Report of 1781 in the following terms:[15]

[721] "But these injuries are not comparable to those which the Comanche inflict. The province is overrun with these Indians, now alone, or as allies of the Nations of the North; at the moment not a foot of land is free from hostility. Its fruits of the field are destroyed, cattle ranches and farms abandoned, and the settlers in terror are fleeing to the settlements, nor do they venture to leave their neighborhood without a troop escort."

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(113) Okla., 1952). See also Ralph Linton in Abram
[175] Kardiner, The Psychological Frontiers of Society
[178] (Columbia University Press, New York 1945), and E. A. Hoebel, The Political Organization and Law-Ways of the Comanche Indians, Memoirs, AAA No. 54 (1940).

[113] [13] F. Haines, The Northward Spread of Horses among the Plains Indians, AA 40.435 (1938).

[113] [14] D. B. Shimkin, Shoshone-Comanche Origins and Migrations, Proc., Sixth Pacific Science Congress, Vol. IV: 17-25, p. 21 (1939).

[15] A. B. Thomas, Teodoro de Croix and the Northern Frontier of New Spain 1776-1783, p. 77 (Norman, Okla., 1941).

[p 142-B]

11: Casagrande E,L-5 (1940) 1954
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had been procured from the Spanish. Peaceful trading relations were begun by the Mallet brothers in 1739,[10] and a lively trade in which hides, horses and captives were exchanged for guns, powder, balls, knives, glass beads, mirrors, vermilion, axes, chocolate, and the like, soon sprang up. The Wichita and other Louisiana tribes as well as French traders were active participants in this commerce and contributed agricultural products. It seems probable that the French, in addition to supplying the Comanche with firearms, also incited them to attack the Spanish. The Comanche had long acted as a buffer between the French from Louisiana to the northeast and the Spanish to the southwest. Indeed, Anza had hoped to establish them as guardians of the northern frontier in the event of French ambitions to southwest expansion.

Contacts with the newly founded United States began shortly after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. That year James Pursely, the first American to penetrate the new territory, spent a season trading with the Kiowa and Comanche,[11] and the first filibusters and freebooters soon followed. Catlin's visit[12] to the Comanche with Colonel Dodge's expedition in 1834 found them at the height of their power—an estimated 30,000 strong and ranging from the Mandan villages in Dakota to the Rio Grande and beyond. The earliest trading-posts were established in 1834 and 1837 after Dodge's expedition had proven the friendly disposition of the Plains tribes. The first treaty between the United States and the Comanche and their allied tribes was negotiated in 1835. In 1846 the United States government agreed to provide for the establishment of trading houses and

[10] A. B. Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico (Glendale, Calif., 1940).

[11] James Mooney, Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians, 17th Annual Report, BAE p. 171 (Washington, D. C., 1898).

[12] George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians, 2 vols., (London, England, 1841).

agencies along the frontier, and to furnish blacksmiths to repair the Indians' arms and utensils.

The government early adopted the policy of passing out gifts, later institutionalized as annuities, at tribal gatherings when treaties were made in futile attempts to stem the harrowing raids of the Comanche and thus pave the way for White encroachment. The following is a representative list of goods distributed at a council in 1845:[29]

> 21 silk handkerchiefs, 3 cotton handkerchiefs, 4 cotton shawls, 8 pieces blue prints, 40½ yards blue and red strouding, 7¾ pieces blue drill, 75 pounds brass wire, 5 dozen tin pans, 13 tin buckets, 12 pounds vermilion, 12 dozen butcher knives, 1½ dozen cocoa handles, 5 dozen horn combs, 8 dozen ivory combs, 2½ dozen files, 7½ M. brass tacks, 2 pounds linen thread, 1½ dozen fire steels, 1½ M. needles, 1½ dozen looking glasses, 4½ pounds indigo and verdigris, 2½ dozen squaw hatchets, 4 dozen tin cups, 1½ dozen pair red blankets, 7½ dozen pair white blankets, 42 small bars lead, 12 large bars lead, 2 pieces unbleached domestic, 35 pounds powder.

Due both to impoverishment caused by the rapidly dwindling buffalo herds and to the pressure of White settlers, the Comanche became increasingly restive. Raiding, fighting with the United States Army and Texas volunteers, and the constant making and breaking of treaties characterized the years up to 1875 when the Comanche were finally rounded up and confined to the Fort Sill Reservation along with the Wichita, Kiowa, and Kiowa-Apache. Typical of the many treaties of the time was the one made at Medicine Lodge, Kansas, in 1867 when the government promised rations, an agency with a warehouse and a resident agent, physician, teacher, carpenter, blacksmith, farmer, miller, and engineer as employees. Through the years 1854–1859 many of the Texas Comanche had already been placed on a reservation where an unsuccessful attempt at farming and a settled life was made.

[29] R. N. Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement, p. 136 (Glendale, Calif., 1933).

13: Simmons H-4 (no date) 1967 NO6 Comanche NO6
(1785-1819) New Mexico

Introduction

OVER three quarters of a century after their final defeat on the plains of Texas, the Comanches continue to excite the interest and imagination of Western history students. This may be attributed, at least in part, to the Comanches' ferocity in battle and to their superb horsemanship, for which they were justly famous. "To fight and ride like a Comanche," was a popular saying on the frontier. But the fame of these Indians, among those who knew them at the height of their glory, rested also on the fact that Comanches were generally regarded as possessing qualities superior to those of other nomadic tribes.

In the late eighteenth century, the Spaniards of New Mexico who had been victims of Comanche raids for decades cultivated an alliance with the tribe against the common Apache foe. The Comanche's fighting abilities and his habit of keeping agreements convinced the Spanish authorities of the usefulness of establishing a permanent peace.

The distinguished colonial citizen, Pedro Bautista Pino, reported of the Comanches in 1812, that "they fulfill with the greatest care all the conditions of treaties; so that we also try to observe all stipulations therein in order not to offend them." Then he added that the Spaniards viewed these people as graceful in appearance, modest in dress and air, industrious, and in general possessing other commendable traits.

James 175
Mooney estimates that in 1690 they numbered no 101
more than 1,600 souls.[2] [161]

To the south resided the Utes, who may be re- [197]
garded as linguistic cousins of the Comanches since
they also spoke the Shoshonean language. The Utes 175
occupied the San Luis Valley in Southern Colorado,
and from this vantage point they maintained close
contact with the Spanish and with the Pueblos and
Navajos in New Mexico. From the Utes, the Co-
manches must have first learned of these peoples,
and from them too, they may have acquired their
first horses.

By 1700 or earlier, the Comanches had begun to
shift their camps southward and eastward. No
doubt, they were drawn by the possibility of obtain-
ing mounts, but at the same time they may have
been starting to feel pressure from stronger tribes to
the north, particularly the Blackfoot and Crow. An
added attraction to the south and east were the
plains teeming with buffalo and antelope.

The first Comanches drifting southward joined Ute 175
parties who were accustomed to trade in the Spanish 648
settlements and the large Indian pueblos of Taos
and Picuris. Thus were the rustics from the northern
wilderness introduced to the material refinements of
more advanced peoples. Surely the whites would 175
have shuddered could they have envisioned the cen- 721
tury and a half of bloody warfare that was to follow 648
upon the Comanche entry into the Southwest.

The first persons against whom the Comanches
displayed their prowess in war were the Apaches
who roamed the hills and plains northeast of Taos.
As early as 1706, a combined Comanche-Ute raiding

175 party struck at Apache rancherias above present
721 Trinidad, Colorado. This event was the opening
648 curtain on several decades of intense hostility between the Comanches and the Plains Apaches. By
175 1733 the continual hammering of the mountain Indians had caused Apache power to crumble in a wide swath of country extending from eastern Colorado to Central Kansas.

Remnants of the defeated tribes fled to the security of settlements in New Mexico where in this same year, a mission for 130 refugees was established by the Spanish near Taos. Some of the defeated Plains Apaches, however, were unwilling to submit to the discipline of Christianity, and as an alternative they fled south, out of range of the Comanches who would exterminate them and the Spaniards who would civilize them.

175 By 1715 the government authorities in Santa Fe
648 had begun to pay heed to the growing danger posed by the Comanches. The Spaniards had not fully realized at this early date that the Apaches of the plains were being displaced by an even more aggres-
175 sive foe. This point was driven forcefully home,
648 however, when the Comanches with their Ute allies
721 assaulted the Taos district in 1716. Other severe raids followed each year thereafter, until the Spanish governor personally led a punitive expedition northward to the vicinity of the Arkansas River in the autumn of 1719. No hostile Indians were encountered, but it was definitely established that the Comanches had filtered through the passes in the Front Range and had occupied much of the valuable buffalo country formerly held by the Apaches.

Comanche attacks against the New Mexican settlements continued, but at the same time the Indians were developing a new interest in trade. Their activities on the plains had netted them considerable surplus wealth in hides, jerked meat, Apache and Pawnee slaves, and horses. 175 439 [721]

The logical outlets for these were the trading fairs held annually in the pueblos of Taos and Pecos. The fairs occurred in September when the farming Indians had the fruits of their fields to offer for barter, and making the events even more attractive were the growing numbers of Spanish goods which were finding their way into the market place. The Comanches thus found it convenient to suspend hostilities for the weeks that the trading was in progress and to enter the pueblos under a flag of truce. Such an arrangement was acceptable to the Spaniards since they looked upon the fairs as providing a useful opportunity to try to convince their enemy to accept a year around peace. 175 439 728 648

The friendly but brief contacts which the Comanches had with the New Mexicans at the fairs in no way, however, deterred them from undertaking raids against the settlements at other seasons of the year. These became particularly devastating in the decades following 1750, as the Comanches extended the range of their attacks into the central and southern portions of the province. By mid-century the Comanches had broken the alliance with their old friends the Utes and in pushing that tribe back into the mountains, they became for the time being the dominant people on the southern Plains. 175 721 648

The Comanche threat to New Mexico became tru- [727]

175 ly alarming as suggested by a report of 1751 which
721 claimed 500 Pueblo Indians and Spanish colonists
648 had been massacred up to that date. When the In-
727 dians numbering several hundred fell on Pecos Pueblo in the summer of this same year, the Spaniards organized a pursuit force and retaliated by surprising the Comanches in their camp, killing 101, and taking the remainder prisoner. Although victories such
175 as this were uncommon, the New Mexican colonists,
721 having realized the gravity of their problems, were
648 more willing to tighten their defenses and join with protective or punitive expeditions at a moment's notice.

Unfortunately, the stiffened resistance merely sharpened the challenge for the Comanche warrior who thrived on danger. So, far from diminishing, the Indian offenses against New Mexico continued
175 to increase in number and severity. In 1774, for ex-
701 ample, almost a thousand warriors devastated the
[648] Tewa district north of Santa Fe. If this figure for
[721] their fighting force is accurate, it strongly suggests
[161] that the Comanches, since moving onto the plains and adapting to horse culture and buffalo hunting, had experienced something of a population explosion. At the end of the century, General Pedro de Nava estimated 2,000 warriors for the Eastern Comanches and 4,000 for the Western.

175 The Spaniards won minor victories now and then,
648 but by the 1770's the Comanches had acquired fire-
[721] arms in quantity so that they were an even more
[411] formidable enemy. Nevertheless Governor Juan
[728] Bautista de Anza in 1785 succeeded in summoning a peace council composed of the leading chiefs of

175
648 the Spanish government through the viceroy in
728 Mexico City authorized an annual distribution of
[431] gifts to the Comanches to be paid for by a special fund created for that purpose.

There were, in truth, a number of cogent reasons why the warlike Comanches were willing to accept Anza's offer of peace in 1786, quite apart from the
[721] elaborate gifts which were to be forthcoming. In the first place, their raids against New Mexico in the 1770's had proved so devastating that the impoverished province, at least for the time being, had little
[164] to offer them. Moreover, a severe smallpox epidemic that had visited most of western North America in 1780-1781 had taken its toll among the Comanches, leaving the tribe greatly weakened for a number of years thereafter. Finally, the Comanches were continuing their drift toward the south and east so that the focus of their attention was moving away from New Mexico and toward the settlements of Texas, Coahuila, and Chihuahua.

Not so understandable is why the Eastern Comanches or Orientales were led to accept peace terms at about the same time as their kinsmen to the west. Apparently, the overriding consideration in this case was the hatred felt toward the Lipan Apaches, against whom the Orientales now joined with the Spanish in common cause. [See Document I].

The peace established in 1785-1786 with both the Eastern and Western Comanches relieved the settled frontier of serious attacks from this tribe for almost a generation and was one of the few notable achievements registered by Spain in her dealings with the Indians of the northern frontier during the eight-

14 [See Category 175, pp. 21-22—Analyst.]

eenth century. Although the Comanches resumed their attacks on the upper Rio Grande Valley in the following century, these were never as damaging as the blows which had fallen on the province in the years immediately prior to the treaties. 175 648 728 [721]

After independence from Spain, when New Mexico was a remote province of the Mexican Republic, the intensity of Comanche incursions increased somewhat—Pecos Pueblo was reduced to utter ruin by 1838—but on the whole the raiders concentrated more heavily on the towns and villages of northern Mexico. 175 648 721

Comanches, traveling in parties as large as 500 and fully organized under their own officers, annually laid waste entire districts as far south as Fresnillo and Zacatecas. A well-defined road appeared—the Great Comanche War Trail—which led from the high plains of Texas across the Big Bend of the Río Grande to strike at the mining communities and haciendas from Durango southward, and according to some reports, as far west as the Gulf of California. [701] [487]

The anxious citizens kept lookouts constantly in the field to give warning of the Comanche approach. Once the alarm had been sounded, settlers, and peones with their families fled to the security of strongly fortified haciendas in somewhat the same manner as the peasants of medieval Europe must have sought refuge in castles from warrior Vikings.

Rather strong evidence suggests that the Comanches during several decades of friendly contact with the Spaniards in New Mexico through observation had learned much concerning the European military system and tactics and had adapted these to their own service. 175 177

13: Simmons H-4 (no date) 1967 NO6 Comanche NO6
(1785-1819) New Mexico

Document Two

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT GENERAL of the Western Interior Provinces, Jacobo Ugarte y Loyola, to the Viceroy of New Spain, Manuel Antonio Flórez, on the importance of maintaining peace with the Comanches, and campaigns which they have executed against the Apaches, March 13, 1788.

SINCE the Comanche Nation made peace with us, its members have undertaken on their own initiative various campaigns against the Apaches, in addition to supplying us voluntarily with units of warriors who have joined our expeditions in New Mexico.

On one expedition which they carried out last July with 95 men commanded by one of their captains called Ysampami, they managed to kill five Faraon Apaches, making prisoner 35 individuals of both sexes and of all ages, according to a declaration made in a message from the General of the [Comanche] Nation to the Governor of the Province [of New Mexico], Dn Juan Bautista de Anza. The original copy of this report is being sent to Your Excellency.

There is no doubt that these Indian warriors will launch other campaigns against the barbarians who are their implacable foes. I have advised the pres-

Document Three

FERNANDO DE LA CONCHA TO THE VICE-roy Conde de Revilla Gigedo, Santa Fé, May 6, 1793, regarding inter-tribal warfare between the Comanches and other Indians.

THE FOUR nations of the Comanches, Utes, Navajos, and Jicarillas who have allied themselves with this Province [of New Mexico] continue without change their good conduct and they remain in harmony with the local settlers. But among themselves they still launch raids, and this stems primarily from the hate which the latter tribes feel for the first.

At the beginning of last winter, the Utes and Navajos got together for a council and they resolved to go and attack the Comanches. They set out immediately and soon encountered a rancheria left unguarded by [Comanche] men who had gone buffalo hunting. They proceeded with little difficulty to destroy it completely, capturing and killing the women and children, and running off the horseherd that was there. When news of this reached the other Comanches, they swore to avenge the offense and raising a considerable war party, they attacked the village of the Utes in a like manner and completely destroyed one of their rancherias, with the result that both [tribes] have suffered almost equal harm from the other.

19: Lowie E-5 (1912) 1915 NO6 Comanche NO6

If I correctly interpret the somewhat confused accounts of several informants, the dances mentioned were performed mainly, or perhaps even exclusively, in connection with a festival, of possibly several weeks' duration, called nā'wapinā'r. This term was interpreted to indicate a challenge to the enemy and a calling of volunteers. At all events, the ceremony originated through the invitation of a man who had lost a son through some hostile tribe or had suffered some other injury at the hands of the enemy that called for revenge. Such a man would select a site for a general assemblage, summon his tribesmen to take part in a nā'wapinā'r, and pass a pipe from one guest to another by way of bespeaking their aid. In general he assumed the part of master of ceremonies.

There was a procession in which the war chiefs, rarely numbering more than six, took part. Some were on horseback. The most renowned warrior came last in the line. Musicians who drummed and sang accompanied the marchers. The renowned captain called a halt, and three times pretended to fix his lance into the ground before actually doing so. When he finally stuck it in, the musicians at once beat their drums. Then the drummers made remarks, and the captain told of the injury experienced by the tribe. The march was then resumed, and after a while the man ranking next to the famous warrior repeated the performance described.

During the entire period of the nā'wapinā'r it seems that the several dances alternated.

The Buffalo (or horn) dance, which could be performed by any of the bands, was declared by one informant to have been the greatest of all the dances. During its performance anyone having a horned bonnet would wear it. The dancers were lined up in a row and would advance a considerable distance in the dance step. Ahead of them was a line of mounted men, while behind them came a row of musicians, and behind these the group of spectators, including women, ranged in the arc of a circle.

The Crow dance was generally regarded by my informants as the exclusive property of the Yápaire'ka band. The performers marched through the entire camp, two abreast, with an officer on either side, armed with a heavy war club with a wrist loop of swift-fox skin, decorated with tassels. The officers deputized certain men to act as guards during the procession. The best dancers took the lead. After having proceeded some distance, they halted to form the arc of a circle. Then the dance began. At first possibly only one couple would advance, then others followed. The dancers imitated the motions of a crow. The managers would stop the dance after a while and tell about the war that was to follow the nā'wapinā'r or make some other announcement of general interest, at the same time going through some motions while the drummers were beating

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

(ca. 1818)

detailed account of those tribes with whom my adventures in this delightful country have made me familiar. If the results of my observations can contribute to your amusement, or aid your laudable endeavours to acquire information concerning the wide-spread sons of the forest, I shall be amply remunerated for the trouble of imparting them to you.

The Comanchees are the most numerous, and therefore the most important nation of Indians inhabiting this Province, and with them I am more intimately acquainted than with any of the other tribes. I shall give them priority of notice.

Let the long suspended destiny of this most valuable province eventuate as it may: whether it shall continue to languish under the wretched and paralising policy of Spain, or shall be received under the benign guardianship of our own country, the aboriginal inhabitants of it are worthy to be better known and more considered than they now are. If they are too far removed from *home*, the starting place and often the goal of charity, to merit attention for the beneficent purposes of amelioration, they nevertheless present sufficient claims to occasional observance on grounds of an exclusive political nature. The Comanchees more particularly, owing to their proximity to the frontiers of the Arkansas Territory, and to their forward and unrestrained habits of rapine, appear, in prospective at least, to sustain some interesting relations to our country. It would not be altogether visionary to predict, that in the course of a few years, these obscure and unnoticed savages will evince their claims to our attention by the massacres and devastations of a border warfare. It is true, they now are, and heretofore have been, peaceably disposed towards us. They find the mules and horses of their ancient enemies, the provincial Spaniards, a more alluring quarry, than is presented by the scattered and humble hamlets of an American frontier. It is true, they are apprized of the difference between the American and the Spanish character; they dread the active energy of the one, as they despise the pusillanimity of the other. Had we a dense and populous front to present them,

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche N06
Texas

(ca. 1818)

they would be in no wise dangerous. But how inadequate is an infant, dispersed, and unorganized settlement, to repel the sudden incursions of an enemy who move with unequalled celerity, and almost inscrutable caution: who traverse the pathless wilderness by day, and pounce on their devoted victims in the unguarded hour of midnight. The national faith and friendships of savages are proverbially treacherous, and are always subordinate to their own weak conceptions of interest, or the more imperative suggestions of fear. The hope of spoil for the most part constitutes their *prium mobile* to hostilities: but they are sometimes capable of adventuring the hazards of battle for the single purpose of revenging real or imaginary injuries.

The Comanchees or I-etans as they are sometimes called, are one among a very few of the primitive nations of Spanish America, who have preserved their pristine independence. To what cause this singularity is attributable, it is difficult to determine. Their oral history is extremely limited and imperfect, and they appear to retain no recollections of a period when their political condition was materially different from what it now is. Of their origin they know nothing. A regular tradition or national legend, seems never to have entered into the policy of these erratic sons of the forest. Careless of the future, they are indifferent to the benefits that accrue from the recollections of the past. The revolving day imbodies all their concerns. Their songs, which are few and of little variation, however ancient they may be, are rather didactic than historical, and are calculated to fire the warriors zeal, or to give solemnity to funeral lamentations. It is however, presumable, that their wandering mode of life and the remoteness and seclusion of the country through which they have ranged time immemorial, have mainly contributed to perpetuate both the identity and the independence of a tribe, whose numbers and capacities for war, are far inferior to others of their proscribed race, that have become almost or quite extinct, by the deleterious spread of a corrupt and unsocial civilization.

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

(ca. 1818)

By comparison with the several minor hordes that are located in the province of Texas, the Comanchees are certainly a very considerable nation. But much is abstracted from their political importance, by their habitual indolence, and their utter unfitness for any thing like serious and protracted warfare. I speak relatively, and under the presumption that they are to be seriously and perseveringly opposed. Without, however, making any moral abatements, they will fall considerably short of the opinion that has obtained in your quarter, as to their actual strength. The idea has been frequently propagated that they can furnish from 12 to 20,000 warriors, and those too of no ordinary prowess.

I do not conceive it necessary to inculcate exaggerated notions of their aggregate strength, or individual bravery, in order to make out their pretensions to the notice of at least the territorial government of Arkansas. Estimate them as they really are, and they may be found sufficiently formidable to excite alarm in a feeble and unprotected frontier; and no portion of our country has partaken less of the parental kindness of the federal administration, than that which is most immediately exposed to their depredations. The following will be found as correct a statement of their numbers and general character as a close observation during a residence among them for several months, has enabled me to obtain.

The tribe known among us by the term Comanchees, is divided into three great parties, each of which is distinguished by a separate appellation, to wit:

Comanchees, Yamparacks, and Tenaways.*

The Comanchees, the lower or most southern party, range through a section of country that is watered by the Colorado or Red river of Texas, embracing in their circuits both sides of the river, from its headwaters to the confluence

*There were at this time at least half a dozen Comanche divisions. It is well to remember that Burnet had direct acquaintance with relatively few Comanches and his means of learning about the others was limited.

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

of the St. Saba, which empties into the Colorado about 60 miles north of St. Antonio. Their migrations are bounded on the west by the mountains, which are generally barren and destitute of game, and on the east by the river Brazos. It is this band principally, that is engaged in the predatory warfare upon the inhabitants of Texas, which they have prosecuted with great assiduity for several years past and which they have continued, with short intervals of peace, from time "whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary." Their incursions have not been confined to the province of Texas, which the miserable attempt at revolution in 1812 has effectually, drained of its once immense herds of mules and horses, but they extend their depredations to the several contiguous provinces beyond the Rio Grande. This party can probably bring into the field about 1500 warriors; but to parade this number, I doubt whether they would not be obliged to put in requisition the virgin bows of unfledged boyhood. The largest party they have been known to muster for a campaign, was estimated by eye-witnesses at 12 or 1500 men; and those who are apprised of the imposing spectacle exhibited by a Comanchee parade, will not suspect a *coup d'oeil* estimate, of extenuation. It was known that many of their kindred band, the Yamparacks, were associated with them, and contributed to eke out the formidable array.

I will resume my remarks as opportunity may offer.

B*****.

[*The Cincinnati Literary Gazette*, May 15, 1824]

Letter II

The next party in geographical order is the Yamparacks. These occupy the head waters of the Colorado, occasionally extending their migrations to the tributary streams of the Rio del Norte. They frequently intermingle with, and are found among the Comanchees and are, in no respect dissimilar to them, in manners, customs or appearance, but are virtually the same people, speak the same language, and are characterized by the same peculiarities. There is one

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

exception, however, to the general resemblance.—The Yamparacks are more honest and punctilious in their dealings, and much less addicted to thievery. This may be accounted for, by the fewness of their opportunities of trade; the commercial intercourse between the Indians and whites, has invariably had a demoralizing influence on the untutored Savages.

The Yamparacks can probably furnish from 7 to 800 warriors. These frequently unite with the Comanchees, and participate largely in their depredations on the provincial Spaniards.

Of the Tenaways my information is less minute and authentic, they being seldom visited in their distinct villages by Americans. But they sometimes descend by families, or small parties, to the Comanchee range, to solicit the charity of their brethren who are more contiguous to our settlements, and are constantly supplied with a profusion of such articles as their fancies or necessities require, and who are extremely liberal to their less favored and often destitute kindred. From the representations of the Comanchees and some of their own chiefs, I conclude their numerical strength does not vary much from that of the Yamparacks. This would place the entire aggregate force of the three tribes at about 3000 warriors, which I presume is a probable computation.

The Tenaways range through a mountainous district that separates the waters of the Rio del Norte, from the rivers of Texas, and they sometimes extend their perambulations to the head waters of the Red River of Natchitoches. They carry on a small traffic with the Spaniards of Santa Fee, from whom they receive blankets, knives and tobacco, in exchange for the mules and horses which they capture from the Spaniards of the adjacent Provinces. They often mingle with the Yamparacks when traversing the southern extreme of their range. The utmost harmony subsists between these several bands. They have no distinct limits assigned them, neither does one party claim, in relation to another, any exclusive sovereignty over the particular sec-

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

always ride without saddles, and without any other encumbrance than the waist-cloth to their persons.—This lightness of apparel gives them a manifest advantage over their Spanish adversaries, whose horses are heavily caparisoned, and whose persons are embarrassed by a cumbrous load of accoutrements that partake more of the pomp, than the uses of war. Light shot guns, javelins, or lances, about 8 feet long, and bows and arrows compose their weapons. For defence they wear on the left wrist, a shield made of Buffaloes hide, consolidated when green by a process in which fire is the principal agent. They are made in an oval or circular form, about two feet in diameter, and presenting a surface slightly convexed. They are exceedingly tough, quite impenetrable to an arrow, and often so to the ball of a *scopete;* and they are light and easily disengaged from the arm in case of emergency. The loss of a shield does not attach an inexpiable disgrace to the character of a Comanchee warrior. They are comparatively novices in the use of fire-arms, and have an insuperable aversion to the weight of Rifles, but employ the bow and lance with great dexterity, and to a dispersed and retreating enemy, with destructive effect. The known capacity of their horses, and their minute acquaintance with the invaded country, which enables them generally to surprise the indolent and inert Spaniards, concurring with the miserable condition of the provinces for defense, inspire them with an artificial fearlessness, which invests them in the view of their ignorant and spiritless enemies, with the hideous horrors of the basilisk. But in truth, these horrors are imaginary: oppose them with decision and energy, and they will crouch like the Spaniel, or fly like the "stricken fawn."—They usually make what they term their grand campaign, once a year, either in the spring or fall season, when the three bands unite and co-operate in plundering and devastating the defenceless provinces that are contiguous to the Rio Grande. Besides these periodical invasions, the preparations for which, bear some resemblance to the pomp and circumstance of war, and the issues are frequently most disastrous to the exposed Provincials; there is a continual egress and

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NOo Comanche NO6
Texas

175 (ca. 1818)
721 regress of small parties from 5 to 50 in number, whose sole object is inglorious predation, and who cautiously avoid all renconters with the enemy, except with the menial herdsmen who attend the droves of the wealthy planters.

[171] [181] Although habitually savage and estranged from the humanizing influence of civilization, the Comanchee warriors are not so wantonly barbarous and sanguinary as many of the primitive nations of our continent. It is true, they 175 seldom give quarter to the Spanish soldiers, and it is equally 726 true, that they seldom receive any from them. It has been alleged too, that they massacre women and children. The charge is not true as to general practice, but there may be some isolated exceptions, growing out of pressing emergency 175 or some extraordinary excitement. When reproved on this 721 awful subject, these undisciplined warriors justify their deeds of horror, as more enlightened nations have attempted to justify theirs, by the law of retaliation: and I suspect that a strict investigation would evince but little disparity in the inhumanities that are reciprocally practiced by these savage and semi-savage belligerents.

175 The Comanchees are always at war with the Osages and 721 Pawnees. A formal declaration has perhaps never tran- 648 spired, but whenever they meet, hostilities ensue. Frequent and sometimes sanguinary recontres happen between them, 175 the Osages and Pawnees being in general the aggressors. In the fall of the year these tribes abandon their villages, and 721 lead a wandering life, ostensibly for the purpose of hunting. They often roam as far as the Comanchee region, professedly in quest of Buffalo, but in reality to "spoil the spoiler of his prey," in which they frequently succeed so far as to return well mounted, although they always leave home on foot. The Comanchees sometimes retaliate upon them by carrying the war into their country; but having little to gain by these excursions, they are unfrequent. Simple bootless war, has few attractions for a people who have neither poets nor historians to perpetuate the fame of their achievements.

175 Strong attachment to kindred is a prominent feature in
152

23: Cabello y Robles G-3 (1778-1786) 1961
NO6 Comanche NO6
Eastern Comanche

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COMANCHE INDIANS IN 1786 BY THE GOVERNOR OF TEXAS*

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY ODIE B. FAULK

The Comanches first appeared in New Mexico in 1706. By mid-century they had driven the Jicarrilla Apaches from the northeastern region of that province and were devastating the Spanish settlements east of the Rio Grande. Continuing their advance southward, these fierce warriors drove the Texas Apaches back upon the Spanish settlements at San Antonio and below the Rio Grande. Their victory at San Saba in 1758 over the Spaniards, whom they considered to be Apache allies, assured their domination on the plains.

Under the illusion that the Comanches would remain away from the settled areas of their control, the Spaniards determined in 1779 to form an alliance with them with the intent of the total destruction or reduction of the Apaches. Although participation in the American Revolution interfered to some extent with the plan, Spanish officials proceeded, nevertheless, with their efforts to bring the Comanches into an alliance. In New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza (1778-1788) secured the desired treaty with the Western Comanches (Yamparikas) in July, 1785, and in Texas Governor Domingo Cabello y Robles (1778-1786) achieved the same goal in October, 1785, with the Eastern Comanches (Kotsetekas and Penatekas).

The acting commandant-general of the Interior Provinces, José Antonio de Rengel (1784-1786), desiring information which would indicate whether the Comanche raiders would keep the peace treaties they had just signed, sent the gover-

*Domingo Cabello, "Respuestas qe el Govr de la Prova de los Texas da a las Preguntas que el Sñr Comd Gral de las Ynterx le hase en oficio de 27 de Enero de 1786: sobre varias circumstancias de los Yndios Cumanches Orientales," April 30, 1786, Bexar Archives (University of Texas Archives, Austin).

23: Cabello y Robles G-3 (1778-1786) 1961
NO6 Comanche NO6
Eastern Comanche

[ca. 1786]

much blindness and harshness, as if they were slaves. 000

SECOND: What Reciprocal Trade Has One Village With Another? 175 438

The commerce and trade that one village has with others is that the Eastern Comanche transport the horses which they acquire in their wars and robberies to the villages of the Western Comanche, that are known by the name *Yumbarioas* [*Yamparikas*], who are the ones that sell or barter rifles, powder, shot, lances, cloth, pottery, and knives which they acquire from the *Canse, Quita, Quirate and Aguaés*; these are also intermediaries in the commerce of buffalo hides, with and without hair, which they work and dress very well. 439

THIRD: What Strength Has Each One? 175

With respect to the strength of each settlement it is not possible to ascertain the number of people that compose them, nor of those of the other villages because they are accustomed to subdivide according to the way they accommodate themselves to the terrain in which they exist and the bounty of the hunt of the buffalo, on which they maintain themselves. Because of the shortage of firearms, they keep their strength gathered with the caution with which they always live; they never situate themselves in a place that will be very uncomfortable, but in which they will be able to be sheltered from their enemies, always having little [scouting] parties circling to observe whether or not they are being attacked. They have the system of wandering from one place to another without maintaining themselves in a fixed locale, and in such manner they plant no crops. They maintain themselves only from the flesh of buffalo and deer, and some roots like sweet potatoes that are abundant in the territory in which they travel. 621 224 175 721 621 175 221 241 262

FOURTH: What Territory Do They Ordinarily Occupy? 175

The Rancherias of the Eastern [Comanche] Indians are 131 [133]

28: Thomas H-4 (no date) 1962 N06 Comanche N06
(1786)

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COMANCHE DOCUMENT[1]

By ALFRED B. THOMAS

THE Tally Sheet, the photostatic document reproduced as plate 2, is the report of a campaign conducted by the Comanche allies of the New Mexican Spaniards against the Apache in the year 1786. Considerable interest attaches to this report. Historically, it contributes a detail in Spanish Indian policy on the northern frontier of New Spain in the late eighteenth century; anthropologically, it reveals possibly the earliest known arrangement of Comanche military societies in a war party. It may be viewed as the earliest Plains pictographic record known; at least this Spanish document indicates that it is a copy of such a record.

The historical background briefly is this. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Spaniards and Pueblos of New Mexico suffered from incessant Ute, Comanche, and Apache attack. In defense Spain supported one tribe against the other: early in the eighteenth century Spaniard and Apache fought Ute and Comanche, the latter just then appearing on the northern horizon of the Southwest. The turn of the half-century saw this situation reversed; the Comanche now occupying Apache lands northeast of the province forced the Spaniards to seek Comanche friendship and at the same time arrange to turn their united energies on the displaced Apache, who pillaged New Mexico from the east and south.[2]

The Tally Sheet is a direct result of an action arising, under these conditions, from a treaty with the Comanche, signed February 28, 1786, according to the fourth article of which inces-

[1] The original of this document, the Tally Sheet reproduced here, is in Audiencia de Guadalajara 103-5-6 No. 43 (Archivo General de Indias, Seville). Another copy is located in Archivo General y Publico, Provincias Internas, Tomo 65 (Mexico City). (See footnote 4.) This article presents an aspect of the writer's study of the northern and northeastern frontiers of Spanish New Mexico, 1593-1821.

[2] A. B. Thomas, Spanish Expeditions into Colorado 1540-1779. The Colorado Magazine of the Colorado State Hist. Soc., November 1924. Also, Spanish Exploration of Oklahoma 1599-1792. Chronicles of Oklahoma, June 1928.

[See facing p. 294—Analyst.]

28: Thomas H-4 (no date) 1962 NO6 Comanche NO6
(1786)

sant war was to be made on the Apache.[3] The Comanche conducted their campaign between May 13 and July 5, possibly the first under the above treaty. The scene of the engagement appears from various details to have been in the Sandia Mountain region south of Santa Fé. The name of the Apache band attacked is unknown.

In the *Noticia*, translated below, are found the names of most of the Comanche chiefs who took part in the peace celebration and in the campaign, the meanings of each of their names in Spanish, a statement of the number of tents under the command of each and of the then three divisions of the Comanche about New Mexico, namely, Yupe, Yamparica, and Cuchanec, or Cuchantica.[4] Elsewhere in his reports[5] Governor Anza indicates that the Yupe occupied the region north of the Rio Napestle (the Arkansas river) as far as the southern part of present Wyoming; that the Yamparica extended across the northern part of Colorado[6] of today, and southward among the Yupe to the Rio Napestle; and that between the Napestle and the present Red river ranged the Cuchanec, whom Anza briefly described from information just furnished him by Francisco Xavier Ortiz, an emissary to these Comanche. Between the Pecos and the Red rivers, Ortiz found eight Cuchanec rancherias located in a quadrangle roughly forty leagues square, that is, about one hundred miles square. Therein he estimated that the smallest rancheria had thirty tents,

[3] Relacion de los Sucesos ocurridos en la Provincia del Nuevo-Mexico con motivo de la Paz concedida a la Nacion Comanche y su reconciliacion de la Yuta, desde 17 de Noviembre de 1785" hasta 15" de Julio de 86" (Provincias Internas, Tomo 65, Archivo General y Publico, Mexico City). This Relacion, divided into fifty numbered paragraphs, is a summary of the reports of Governor Anza of New Mexico over the above months. Hereafter citation will be simply Relacion with paragraph number. The writer is indebted to the American Council of Learned Societies for assistance in securing copies of this Relacion and related material in the archives of Mexico City.

[4] This Noticia is an enclosure accompanying the above Relacion in Tomo 65 of the Provincias Internas. With this Noticia there is also another copy of the Tally Sheet reproduced here. (See footnote 1.).

[5] Relacion, paragraphs 2 and 3.

[6] The Yamparica were also noted in this area eight years previously by Dominguez and Escalante, two padres who made an expedition in 1779 northwest of New Mexico (Diario y derrotero de los RR PP Fr. Francisco Atanasio Dominguez y F. Silvestre Velez de Escalante in Documentos para la Historia de Mexico, segunda serie, tomo I, 392–420).

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 N06 Comanche N06

ing domains at the expense of some of their neighbors. The British companies encouraged their tribes to drive off the French-allied tribes, and they gave them guns wherewith to do it. The French responded in kind, and the tribes of either party used their new weapons to drive the unarmed tribes on the western frontier before them. Thus with pressure behind them and an attractive lure before them, a number of the tribes of the Mississippi Valley sought sanctuary and prosperity in the relatively unpopulated lands of the West. The Comanches were among them.

. . .

The Comanches . . . appear in the sixteenth century to have occupied the country that lay around the headwaters of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. They were an eastern branch of the far-flung Shoshonean group of tribes and at that time it is unlikely that they would have been distinguishable from other eastern Shoshoneans. But in the eighteenth century the Comanches moved down into the southern Plains, while the Shoshones were driven back over the Rocky Mountains by invaders from the east. The Comanches became a discrete entity and one of the first, if not the first, of the Plains tribes to acquire horses.[1]

. . .

The Comanche cultural background was that of the so-called "Digger Indians" of the Great Basin. In the tradition of these tribes there was no great social organization. People moved and lived in small isolated family bands. Each was autonomous and economically self-sufficient on a low subsistence level. Religion was vaguely defined and almost wholly devoid of ceremonial structure. Arts were thin, and life offered little of richer satisfactions. War was a thing to be avoided, for the Basin Shoshoneans had no military organization and were wholly lacking in fighting prowess.[2]

In the Plains the Comanches never wholly shed this heritage, but in the new setting they wrought some mighty changes in their way of life. With adequate food resources and the horse they were able to prosper in numbers and so to enlarge the size of their bands. Yet they never forsook band autonomy for tribal government. Religion remained to the very end almost wholly an individual enterprise with few group rituals and no tribal ceremonials.

It was in warring and raiding that the great transformation took place.

[1] Ernest Wallace and E. A. Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman, 1952) pp. 3–10.

[2] J. H. Steward, *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Socio-political Groups* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 120, 1938).

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

Out of apparent weakness emerged the wildest marauding brigandage. The Comanches whipped and drove the Apaches from the southern Plains. They stalemated the Spanish. They decimated the pueblo of Pecos. They ranged far below the Rio Grande on slave- and booty-taking raids into Old Mexico. They blocked the westward expansion of the Texas frontier for several decades. They became "The Spartans of the Prairies." They were rough, tough, aggressive and militant individualists. They gave trouble to all their enemies and to themselves. And in their way, out of the nothingness of Shoshone legal backgrounds they shaped a crude but effective system of law to cope with the clashes of individual with individual within their ranks.

* * *

The basic postulates of the Comanche way of life are simple and few. They express a strong individualism and man-to-man aggressiveness in the following terms:

Postulate I. The individual is supreme in all things.

Postulate II. The self of the male is realized in striving for accumulated war honors, horses, and women.

Postulate III. Women are sexually and economically desirable but are inferior and subordinate to men.

Corollary 1. The sex rights of a husband to his wife are limited to himself and his brothers.

Postulate IV. The strongest social tie is that of brother to brother.

Postulate V. Sexual relations between kin (incest) constitutes subhuman behavior.

Postulate VI. War is essential to the prosperity of the tribe and the individual self-expression of the male.

Postulate VII. The great spirits (Sun and Earth) have powers of "legal" judgment.

Postulate VIII. Each Comanche ought to cooperate with others and help them in their life's activities.

Corollary 1. Altruism and sharing of goods is socially desirable.

Corollary 2. The killing of a fellow tribesman is not permissible.

Postulate IX. Horses, especially favorite horses, have quasi-human personalities.

The simple needs of Comanche society did not impose any great social pressure for governmental controls, and the high value placed upon individual freedom of action also worked to hold government at a minimum. If a Comanche had been invited to subscribe to a political slogan, he would have given his assent to the proposition that "that government is best which governs least." So fully was this precept expressed in a lack of political action that That's It, one of the most acute of our Comanche informants,

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

622 in commenting on the band headmen, or peace chiefs, remarked, "I hardly
[642] known how to tell about them; they never had much to do except to hold the band together." The headman was a magnet at the core of the band, but his influence was so subtle that it almost defies explicit description. He worked through precept, advice, and good humor, expressing his wisdom through well-chosen words and persuasive common sense. He was not elected to office or even chosen. "He just got that way." His role and status were only slightly more institutionalized than were those of the Eskimo headman. In the making of any important decisions of group policy all men were free to have their say. Yet among them all, the wiser old head, whose time-tested judgment the people respected, was the leader. In matters of daily routine, such as camp moving, he merely made the decisions himself, announcing them through a camp crier. Anyone who did not like his decision simply ignored it. If in time a good many people ignored his announcements and preferred to stay behind with some other man of influence, or perhaps to move in another direction with that man, the chief had then lost his following. He was no longer chief, and another had quietly superseded him.

624 War chiefs were outstanding fighters whose accumulated records of
555 honored deeds were tangible evidence of their prestige status. Any Comanche
701 was free to initiate a raid or organize a war party—if he could muster a band of followers. The Comanches were chronically at war with the Ute,
721 Pawnee, Apache, Osage, Tonkaway, and sundry other tribes. In later days, the whites of Texas and the Mexicans on both sides of the Rio Grande were fair game. War, for the Comanches, was certainly a national pastime, if not the conscious practice of a national political policy. We suspect it was both. But so far as it was a national policy, it was not explicitly directed
[555] by a governing military or political body. It was a matter of individual motivation, prepared by training since infancy and spurred by a social system that gave rich psychological rewards to the men who were bravest in the face of the enemy or most successful in running off the horses of hostile tribes or the horses and cattle of Texas ranchers.

701 On the raid the leader of the war party—the man who had organized
624 it—had temporary dictatorial powers such as a peace chief never enjoyed. He determined the objectives of the raid; he appointed scouts, cooks and water carriers; he set the camping places and the route of march; he divided the booty, if booty there was. In all his directives he was implicitly obeyed. If anyone seriously objected, he was free to leave the party and go his own way. Success on the raid demanded tough leadership, and the followers of a war chief submitted to it. Yet so strong was the Comanche sense of individual freedom that at any point a man could pick up his arrows and go home.

624 In view of their basic values of individual supremacy and the related

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

and actually in many, a girl had no formal voice in the choice of her husband. Her brothers gave her away in exchange for a consideration. The takers were usually older and established warriors and hunters who had the goods. In the Comanche ideal such arrangements made for the best marriages. But they were marriages in which the *woman* was at the mercy of her husband. Working against the stability of such marriages was a strong current of romantic idealism among the young. The ambition of the adolescent girl was to be a *naiβi*,[5] i.e., a beautiful maiden with lustrous, black hair hanging in long braids, and dressed in a fine fringed buckskin dress. The young bucks for their part strove to attract the attention of the girls by playing the role of *tuiβitsi*: "a handsome young man who looks good on a horse." Wife-absconding was really an escape in which a frustrated wife sought a more romantic match with a daring warrior.

Comanche elopements were invariably linked to a war party. The man in the case would be going on a raid with his friends, and he would make an assignation with the woman to go along. It was a way provided by custom to violate the marriage rights of the rightful husband as defined by custom and sustained by law! A nice example of internal inconsistency in the ways of a culture.

When a woman and her lover took off with a war party, two courses were open to the jilted husband. He could mount in hot pursuit in the hope that he could overtake them before they reached enemy territory. Or he could bide his time until they returned from the raid. In enemy country he could not press his suit; here all Comanches had to stand shoulder to shoulder. Aside from this, he could institute his action wherever he might be able to confront his tortfeasor. He might take along some compatriots—brothers, real or putative—to strengthen his courage and his arm, if need be. A real man, however, went alone. It was not necessary for him to gather witnesses, for a Comanche legal action was in no sense a trial. Questions of evidence rarely, if ever, entered. The wife-stealer, or even the adulterer, had no desire to conceal his deed; his aim was to flaunt his prestige in the face of the challenged husband.

If he followed the dictates of decorum, he politely addressed the defendant as "brother." The defendant replied in kind. Did not Comanche brothers share their wives? Syllogistically the reasoning runs:

> Men who share a wife are brothers.
> This man has assumed a share in my wife.
> Therefore, he is my brother.
> (But he is going to pay for the privilege!)

The immediate goal of the prosecuting husband was to get *nanewɔkɔ*, restitutive damages. As an opening gambit he placed his demands high,

[5] Phonetic symbols are used as in the International Phonetics System.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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another bunch went back into Texas somewhere and they all went separate there. And now these, I forgot what their name is . . . way up in southwest of California, I think. Well, they talk like us. I don't know their white man name but us Indians call them *ɔkai*. That has meaning of "*red* Comanches." That's what their name is. Then over there in Utah there's a bunch talk like us, and they talk easy, slow, say every word like us Comanches. They call us word means something like "they come from hot country." You know, some folks tell you that Comanches come from Mexico, but it ain't true. Comanches been here and there but they come from up north somewhere. My folks, as far as they can remember, come from Colorado near Denver somewhere, but it wasn't no Denver in them days. The army run my folks and their folks in Oklahoma, but we didn't belong here way back. We from Colorado. That's where my father's father was killed by them Utes. I still know that country from what the old people told me and what I ask them.

Migrations

In the late 1600s the Comanches began to migrate southward into contact with the Spanish settlements of New Spain and east onto the Plains. The Comanches most likely moved south to be nearer a source of horses, which they first acquired raiding with the Utes in northern New Mexico. The first large group of Comanches appeared in the New Mexico area around 1705. In the succeeding ten or fifteen years, with the Utes, they were constant sources of harassment to the Spanish settlements in the area. In approximately 1726, the Comanches, perhaps feeling their new power with the acquisition of the horse, turned on their former allies, the Utes. Many of the war stories told by Sanapia and some of my older Comanche informants tell of horse-raiding expeditions against the Utes.

In the early eighteenth century the Comanches began to expand to a greater degree onto the Plains. The contraction of the pedestrian Dismal River culture in the central Plains around 1725 is attributed by some authors to the energized predatory equestrian Comanche people. By the middle of the eighteenth century the Comanches had established themselves as a real threat to the Spanish settlements in New Mexico. At first, however, the Spanish policy toward the Comanches was relatively long-suffering because the existence of the mounted and war-like Comanches acted as a protective barrier on New Spain's eastern frontiers against intrusion from that direction by large numbers of French and English. During this period, however, the Comanches made treaties with certain tribes to the north who were sympathetic to the French, and thus French traders began to supply the Comanches with firearms, a trade item which the Spanish had always feared to release to the Comanches. In the late eighteenth century the dangerous situation provoked by the Comanche's acquisition of guns stimulated the Spanish to send military forces against the Comanches, whose center at that time was in southeastern Colorado. In approximately 1790 the northern Comanche bands, perhaps responding to the military pressures imposed by the Spanish, made an alliance with the Kiowa, an alliance which was never broken.

In 1820 Major Long encountered a large camp of Comanches on the upper great bend of the Arkansas River. Prior to this time the Comanches had little

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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man, if he was fortunate, could become a peace chief, but a peace chief possessed no real authority and functioned most importantly as a mediator in the disputes which arose among the younger men.

With the greater food supply offered by the seemingly boundless bison herds, hunting magic decreased in importance. Antelope magic did persist from the Shoshone heritage. The more favorable living conditions and constant food supply also allowed the individual bands, which had retained their Basin characteristics, to become larger and to achieve a greater degree of independence from their sister bands. The emphasis on the buffalo as a food source also tended to decrease the importance of gathering and exploitation of the floral environment for food. Further, the Comanches made little or no use of fish and of such small game as rabbits (Lowie 1954:6).

The Basin Shoshone practice of infanticide disappeared as the family group could more efficiently care for its offspring. The practice of enculturating slaves and captives became common among the Comanches in order to augment their numbers and specifically to free males for hunting and warfare. The stress on war and hunting also tended to debase the position of women, and such practices as the mutilation of wives, a custom which had never occurred in Basin Shoshone culture, came into practice.

Patterns of religious belief and behavior also underwent certain changes from Basin life to the Plains. A vaguely defined belief in a Great Spirit persisted, as did the relative lack of concern with the afterlife. However, the intense fear of ghosts held by the Basin Shoshone diminished in the Comanche Plains culture. Also, the practice of power transmission from individual to individual, instead of power source to individual, developed in importance. The decrease in ghost fear and, it is assumed, witchcraft in Comanche culture, as opposed to the Basin culture, was greatly facilitated by the lessening of intrasocial tensions and the Comanches' ability, through warfare, to turn aggressions outward and away from the primary group. As a whole, Comanche religious patterns were exceedingly simple and lacking in elaborate ceremonialism and ritual, at least compared to their Plains neighbors (Hoebel 1940:83).

The Comanches possessed characteristics, other than their paucity of ceremonialism, which served to differentiate them from other Plains tribes. The Comanche bands were more self-managing than bands found among other Plains groups. Warrior societies, a diagnostic trait of Plains culture, were lacking in Comanche society except in the most rudimentary form. The Sun Dance was not a vital aspect of Comanche culture. Decoration of clothing with beads, quills, and ornaments of bone, shell, and metal was deemphasized, while heavy fringing of the garments was the rule. The Comanche tepee was built on a four-pole base like that of the Blackfoot, Sarsi, Ute, and Shoshone; while the Comanches' historic neighbors, such as the Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa-Apache used a three-pole foundation (Lowie 1954:33).

By the early nineteenth century the bison herds were greatly diminished on the south Plains, and the Comanches increasingly turned to raiding to augment their economy. During this period the Comanches raided New Mexico, the Santa Fe Trail, northern Texas, and Old Mexico, sometimes as far south as Durango.

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towns of Cache, Snyder, and Indiahoma. The *penatɜkə* continue to be the southernmost of the Comanche bands, centered in the vicinity of Walters, Oklahoma.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous and pervasive problems which have confronted the Comanche in the twentieth century are those directly associated with the process of acculturation with the dominant white culture. The traditional–progressive and conservative–liberal schism which has appeared as a disruptive force in contemporary Comanche society very closely follows band boundaries. As might be expected, the southern band, the *penatɜkə*, a people with a relatively long history of white contact experience, have been more successful in their transition into the twentieth century than have the *yapai* Comanches, the band with the least amount of contact experience. At present the *penatɜkə* are the progressive and liberal Comanches, while the *yapai* stand as the rallying point for all traditionally oriented and conservative Comanches. The *yapai* are joined in the traditionalist camp by the *kwahada* and the *nɔkoni*. This major division is thought of by the Comanches as a division between the northern "tribes" and the southern "tribes."

Most contemporary northern Comanches do not use the term *penatɜkə* for the southern people; rather they call them *hɔnitaiβo*, which means "eat corn like a white man," or, more literally, "corn white men." They are often referred to in English as "Freckles," alluding to the great degree of mixed-blood Comanches who, the northerners believe, fill the southerner's ranks. The southern Comanches are less colorful than the northerners in their invectives, simply stating that the northerners are, for the most part, uneducated, drunken, shiftless, and generally responsible for the poor reputation which the Comanches possess in many of the white communities in southern Oklahoma.

Historical indications of the basis for the present-day dichotomy of Comanche society are suggested by Richardson in *The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement* (1933). Perhaps the most significant single factor responsible for the subsequent divisiveness of the northern and southern Comanche bands is the geographic distance which separated them well into historic times. At the peak of Comanche territorial expansion, as many as 600 miles could have separated the northern bands, ranging in southern Colorado and southwestern Kansas, from southern bands, inhabiting northcentral Texas.

The Kiowa and northern Comanches made a treaty in 1790 which did not include the southern Comanche bands. This treaty was never broken. During the Texas Revolution the southern bands refrained from taking advantage of the chaos in Texas to raid and plunder, while the northern Comanches and their Kiowa allies joined to make one of the most destructive Indian raids in Texas history. After the Mexican defeat in 1837 the Cherokee chief, Bowl, was commissioned to visit the various Comanche bands to seek peace. The southerners were cooperative and friendly; the northerners, however, were insulting and hostile. In the 1850s when the southern bands were put on reservations in Texas, the northern bands continued their raiding activities with the Kiowas. During this time agent officials complained of the demoralizing effects which the northern Comanches had on the southern reservation wards. Further, members of the

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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southern (Wasps or Quick Stingers) band joined the United States Army in its war against the "wild" northern Comanche bands. This bit of "Freckle" treachery is still perpetuated in the war stories told by the northerners.

The most obvious contemporary example of the ancient roots of this Comanche factionalism concerns the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache constitution established as a result of the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867. The southerners favor a separate Comanche constitution, while the northerners view this as an attempt to break the long-standing alliance between the northern Comanches and the Kiowas. Sanapia's statement on this subject is typical of the northerner's sentiment.

> Here, up to today, those Walter's people are trying to break us up. How could they do that? I got grandchildren that's Kiowa, and the Comanches are all mixed in with them Kiowas. We all together . . . got to stay that way. Those southern people aren't like us. All their old people are Mexicans. Well, they Comanches, same as us, but they act like white people. We've been with these Kiowas and Apaches for a long time, and we can't break it up.

Of course, this traditional–progressive and conservative–liberal differentiation suggests but the grossest divisions in Comanche society. There is also the Christian–peyotist factionalism, for example; however, like the other minor factional elements, it is subsumed under the greater northern–southern Comanche divisions. The northern people consider themselves peyotist and look with scorn on the southerner's predilection for Christianity—the white man's religion. The southerners consider the northerners' religious bias primitive and heathenish and but a further example of the inferiority of the northerners in general. In my field research I found the southern Comanches, relative to the northern Comanches, to be generally lacking in knowledge of, or sympathy toward, those aspects of Comanche culture considered by the northerners and Comanche literature to be traditional in nature, that is, relating to the time of the nomadic culture of the Comanches and the values and world view which it posited.

The preceding account of northern versus southern Comanche orientation is intended as a generalizing descriptive attempt. There are, of course, progressive northern Comanches and conservative southern Comanches. However, the relatively rigidly defined spatial distribution of the opposing "tribes" will usually call for the progressively oriented northerner to move south and the conservative southerner to move north. I observed several instances in which an individual, in order to visibly state his factional allegiance, moved his abode into the geographic area most closely identified with the faction which he supported.

Sanapia is a *yapai* Comanche and an archconservative and traditionalist. The majority of my informants were also northern Comanches, though not all were *yapai*. These were the only people who possessed some "accurate" knowledge concerning native doctors and doctoring practices and who actually interacted in this institutionalized framework. The southerners, recognizing Sanapia's role among the northerners, emphasized the superiority of white doctors over the "superstitious" doctoring practices valued by the majority of northerners.

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simply as the department heads had imagined, the department and Chief Parker arrived at this sensible solution:

Nothing would be done about men who already had more than one wife, but they were not to take any more wives. Even if one died, a man would have to get along on what wives he had left. All single men would be restricted to marrying one wife. A violation of any one of these restrictions would bring about prosecution under the white man's law.

Among the Indians I knew intimately enough to be familiar with their family lives, I knew of only one who violated this agreement. He was a compulsive drinker, and was about to starve the two-wife family he already had when he took on a third wife. Ultimately he had to move onto the reservation permanently so as to get food, and I lost track of him. His Indian neighbors seemed to be ashamed of his conduct and tried to ignore his existence.

Polygamy had been an economic and social necessity for the Comanches. From the time they entered written history, when they came into contact with the Spanish people of Santa Fe about 1700, until their surrender in 1878 at Fort Sill, their history was one of continuous warfare. They had fought and defeated the Pawnees, the Osages, the Tonkawas, the Navahoes, the Utes, and the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico and Arizona. They had established an inland empire, Comanchería, just as legitimately as Charlemagne established his, and for a time they rode the crest of the horse-buffalo culture. They marketed horses with the Canadian Indians, raided as much as 1,500 miles into Mexico, and had seen the Pacific Ocean. They had stopped the advance of Spain to the north and to the east and that of the French to the west and to the south. Then, in the years of the new kind of warfare which brought about their decline, the United States, the Republic of Texas, the Confederacy, and Mexico were among their enemies. During all this time there was no period when the tribe as a whole was at peace.

In war men die young, and the male-female balance is lost. Continual warfare brought about an erosion of the numbers of Comanche men out of all proportion to the natural losses, through death, of the women. It was only through the custom of polygamy that every woman could have a husband and the birthrate could be maintained.

Then too, there had to be many trained hands to keep a Comanche

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camp functioning properly. The tasks were varied and time-consuming, and no one woman could have taken care of all of them.

The warrior-husband was the killer of game, the procurer of buffalo meat, the Comanches' principal source of food. He had to have two sets of trained horses—one trained for war, the other for the killing of buffalo. In either pursuit, his life was largely dependent on the horse. He manufactured both his riding gear and his weapons, and he trained his own horses. His fighting was practically on a twelve-month basis, since, though the Comanches did not like winter fighting, most of the ambitious warriors made raiding expeditions into Old Mexico when the group went into winter camp.

The husband, therefore, could be of little or no help around the camp, and the labor had to be divided among the women. Usually one of the women was an expert horsewoman and had the responsibility of her husband's horse herd, which often numbered a hundred or more. When the fall hunt was on for the winter's supply of meat, the wives did the skinning and butchering. They dried the meat and made the pemmican. Also, they prepared and tanned the hides. After the tanning came the making of clothing. This included everything the family wore, both in summer and winter. Since there was neither needle nor thread, the holes in the leather were made with a stone awl or one made from bone, and sinew taken from along the backbone of a buffalo or deer was used for thread.

Other hides were converted into robes for bedding or into covers for the tepees. When camp was moved, tepees had to be taken down and fastened on travoises, like all the other camp gear, and then camp must be set up again at the new location. All of this was strictly woman's work.

Somewhere, sometime, during breathing spells from all these duties, the women bore babies, nursed them, and raised them to be good Comanches. And all this was in a society without a recognized medium of exchange, in which no one could hire anything done. The Comanches did, however, utilize slave labor. Successful warriors furnished captive women to their wives for helpers. These captive women were given the opportunity to trade their slave status for wifehood, and captive girls were carefully trained to become Comanche wives. Captive boys were trained as warriors to fill the vacancies in the warrior ranks. In addition to members of other tribes, Anglos, Spaniards, and Mexicans were abducted to be made slaves.

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agonizing time came after he had told me who Mo-cho-rook was, where he came from, and many of his peculiarities when I asked him, "Oshey-him Mo-cho-rook?" placing the emphasis on Mo-cho-rook. In other words, what does Mo-cho-rook mean? Without going through the painful steps we used to arrive at it, this was his explanation. "White man say, Comanche so cruel he makes white man's blood run cold. Mo-cho-rook means, he is so cruel, he makes Comanche's blood run cold."

This, then is the story of Mo-cho-rook, after placing all the fragments together, and with the editing of the squaw man. Sometime in the middle twenties of the last century, an unusually well-planned raid was made into Old Mexico. It was made by a leader of excellent repute. His raids had always been successful, and he always picked out a select group from the volunteers. This time he selected about a hundred young but proven warriors. Each was to provide himself with two good horses, one to have a pack saddle. The end of the raid was to be the capture of a town that had never been raided from north of the river.

It was well protected on north, east, and west by unhospitable land. It was fifty miles from the nearest water, on those three sides. This rather large ranch town sat near the head of a fertile, well-watered valley. It was twenty-odd miles to the next nearest town, with only ranches lying in between.

These people were very rich in good horses and cattle. Upward of a hundred or more families lived in the town. As the plans were laid out the Comanches would move in to well-concealed hideouts in the hills below the town. The town was too large to be taken by direct attack. At siesta time, part of the warriors would make an attack on the horse herders and stampede the horses to the west out onto the desert. After the pursuit was well away from town, the herd would be headed to the north.

As many of the pursuers as possible would be ambushed, as they would be presumably strung out. But the pursuit was not to be discouraged, and they were to be led as far away from town as possible.

Once the pursuit was well away from town, the rest of the warriors were to attack the town, where the only opposition was supposed to be the old men and the boys. The available horses would have been taken by the able-bodied men of the town for the pursuit. All the old

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men and big boys were to be killed. The only exception would be if an old saddlemaker was willing to come along and work for his life.

The women and children and all the loot were to be brought to a central spot where the booty was to be loaded on the hundred packhorses, along with the best of the women and the children. The prisoners would be tied on and the horses turned loose so as to be driven across the desert-like land. The plan was to start as soon as possible and drive all night, and they would be to water before the middle of the next forenoon.

There were to be water bags, so as to give prisoners a drink, but no warrior was to touch water until they arrived at the rendezvous with the warriors who had the horses. There they figured they could safely rest a day, and then it was several hard days to the river and safety. The leader was sure that the pursuit would not be strong enough to follow across the river.

The horses were run off, the town was captured, all desirable loot was placed on the packhorses, and the retreat was made safely back across the river. But one thing unforeseen and uncontemplated happened. The women had such a fear of life as Comanche slaves that they fought the warriors to the death. The story is that they would even take up their children and hurl them at the warriors as though they were sticks of wood.

The women used their butcher knives, hatchets, and axes for weapons, anything they could get their hands on, even the children. Thoroughly enraged, the warriors not only killed all the women, young and old, but they fired the town against the orders of their leader, who figured this would notify the whole countryside.

While the warriors were searching and firing one of the last houses, they heard a baby cry and found a very young baby boy, hidden up on the top of the wall, shoved back under the roof. This was the one living person of all of those that had been left in the town. Though they were many days from their womenfolks, they were able to bring this child to their women alive. He was raised as a Comanche and became a great warrior. He was Mo-cho-rook.

I said earlier that as nearly as I could tell, he was already a legend among the Comanches while yet he lived. I doubt that I can remember half of the stories that were told concerning him. One was that he would have but one wife at a time, and they soon died from overwork. Another was that his present wife was the fourth sister he had had as

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DYEING, SPINNING AND WEAVING, BY THE CAMANCHES, NAVAJOES, AND OTHER INDIANS OF NEW MEXICO.[1]

By J. Henry Peters.

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Thomas Ewbank, Esq.,

Dear Sir: Fully appreciating the heartiness and zeal, with which you direct your researches into the various branches of inquiry and learning connected with your important bureau, I with great pleasure, but with diffidence, accede to your request, and give you such information with regard to the manufactures of wool and cotton, as I have acquired in my rambles among our western Indians; and more especially, among the Camanches, Navajoes, and Apaches of western Texas and southern New Mexico. I have not been further west than Paso del Norte, in Texas, nor further north than Sonora, in New Mexico, and the surrounding county.

It is known to every observing traveler in those parts of our country — now no longer remote — that the brilliancy and durability of the various shades of primitive colors, and the few semi-colors that those Indians dye their wool in, are probably not equalled by the learned and scientific chemists of Europe, and our own country — an important fact, that seems not to have excited the curiosity of our otherwise enquiring countrymen. Should I be able, through your instrumentality, to bring to the public notice, such facts as will lead to enquiry and investigation, I should consider myself as having contributed somewhat to our national advancement in one branch of the arts at least, and that one of the most important.

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The Camanche, Navajoe, and Apache Indians, present the curious spectacle of marauding bands of well mounted men; seemingly always committing predatory incursions upon their civilized neighbors, the Texans and Mexicans, apparently con-

[1] Reprinted from the *Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Patents*, for 1850, part 1.

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stantly on the alert for evil, and yet, possessing great skill in the more peaceful and benevolent habits of the herdsman and shepherd.

The depredations of the immense number of sheep, almost daily chronicled in our gazettes, are not made to appease hunger only; but to add to the already immense flocks that overspread, as I have been told by them, the region of country lying west of the Sierra Madre, and east of California.

In the spring and summer of 1843, in company with an old friend — one of the Creeks who had emigrated west of the Mississippi, soon after the treaty with them in 1832 — I traveled westward. My guide and companion had acquired a good knowledge of the language and habits of the Camanches, Navajoes and Apaches, and had probably not altogether abstained from joining them occasionally in their irruptions upon the settlements of their timid neighbors of Chihuahua and Sonoro. I found him "as one having authority," and of course, very useful, both in the protection he afforded me, and the information he enabled me to acquire.

Among the first objects of interest to me, next to the matchless feats of horsemanship they perform, and which have so often been written of — was the number and variety of articles wrought by them, both useful and ornamental, and which might well vie with the skill of more civilized artizans. Among these were the beautiful fabrics composed of wool, and a kind of grass cloth, and some few of cotton. The object, however, of greatest interest to me, was the art of imparting to wool, etc., the beautiful colors I had often before admired, and to this I gave most attention. Like other Indians, I found them unwilling to impart knowledge voluntarily, and I had in my previous and long intercourse with the western tribes, early learned not to make inquiries that might excite their special attention to my designs. Our Indians are not disposed to impart to their white brethren, unless their citizens, any thing that might be useful out of their own country, in which particular, they are not unlike the Chinese, so that with the exceptions of their modes of dyeing and spinning, I will not now attempt to give you any certain account. The information